



CAPITOL NEWS

FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE 21ST MICHIGAN SENATE DISTRICT

OCTOBER 7, 2005

K-12 SCHOOL AID BUDGET PASSED. The over \$12 billion K-12 budget has been sent to the Governor for her signature. The budget includes a \$175 increase in the per-pupil foundation allowance. It also maintains the 2004-2005 funding level of programs such as school readiness, at-risk programs, vocational education, bilingual education, developmental kindergarten and early childhood grants. We were able to increase funding for programs such as adult education, competitive math grants, advanced and accelerated learning and special education programs. The K-12 budget was increased by over \$290 million from the 2004-2005 funding level and is the largest state budget, showing how we are committed to educating our children.

POST-LABOR DAY SCHOOL START LEGISLATION SIGNED BY GOVERNOR. Parents, students and tourism-related business owners would benefit by requiring schools to start after Labor Day. The new starting date would allow parents to take longer trips during the extended weekend without having their children miss school days. Starting school after Labor Day would generate an estimated \$10 million more in tourism-related tax revenue for the state and would create an estimated 2,000 new jobs and between \$100 million and \$200 million in economic activity.



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PROTECTING PROPERTY RIGHTS. The rights of Michigan's private property owners will be more secure and clearly defined thanks to legislation targeted for quick action this past week. Following a U.S. Supreme Court decision in the *Kelo v. City of New London* case, which allows the seizure of private property for private economic development projects, the Senate has put together a plan to help protect the rights of Michigan's private property owners. Senate Joint Resolution E, a constitutional amendment dubbed "MI Home" has been introduced to strengthen Michigan's Constitution by defining what constitutes public use and clearly stating that land cannot be taken away for private economic purposes. Senate Bill 693 strengthens Michigan's existing eminent domain statute and clarifies that private business economic development could not fall under this "public use" definition. The proposed legislation is before the Senate Committee on Transportation. If approved, the amendment is slated to be on the ballot for the 2006 election, while SB 693 is expected to be brought before the full Senate later this fall.

MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG COVERAGE. Beginning on January 1, 2006, Medicare will offer beneficiaries assistance in paying for a wide range of prescription drugs. In October, 2005 you should be receiving information in the mail about this program. It will provide you with information about your options as well as information on how to apply for this program. Beginning on November 15, 2005 you may enroll in a Medicare Prescription drug benefit plan if you decide it is the best option for you. The closing date is **May 15, 2006** so you have the time needed to make an informed decision on what will be best for your situation.

There are several websites you may want to visit to learn more about this program. The first is the Official U.S. Government Site for People with Medicare, <http://www.medicare.gov/>. On that site there is also a very helpful Drug Plan Cost Estimator:

http://www.medicare.gov/medicarerereform/MPDP_Cost_Estimator.asp

AARP also has information on their website at:

http://www.aarp.org/health/medicare/drug_coverage/guide_to_the_new_medicare_prescription_drug_covera.html

The most important thing you need to remember is that this is a voluntary program. You may not need to enroll if you already have good drug coverage from your present insurers.

Finally, to enroll, or if you have questions, call Medicare at **1-800-633-4227** (24 hours a day, 7 days a week) to get the answers you need. They can assist you in determining what works best for you.